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Food and Agriculture - ~~XXXX~~ report to U.N.Council by Mr. Norris Dodd, Director General of Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations - Copy communicated.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS 1201 CONNECTICUT AVENUE,
N.W.X., WASHINGTON, D.C.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REPORT TO COUNCIL FROM FAO DIRECTOR-GENERAL OUTLINES MEASURES TO BETTER THE LOST OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD'S GREAT FOOD DEFICIT AREAS.

J.E.Dodd, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, returned to Washington in mid-April from an across-the world tour of member nations which took him into the Mediterranean Basin, the Near East, Asia and the Far East.

Mr. Dodd has ~~reported~~ reported the results of his mission to the FAO Council, which opened a two-week session in Paris on 13 June. Attached is a copy of the Director-General's report, for your information and immediate use.

ORIGINAL: English

CL6/2,
20th May 1949.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR L'ALIMENTATION ET L' AGRICULTURE

COUNCIL OF FAO

Sixth Session
13-25 June 1949
Paris, France

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

ON HIS RECENT MISSION TO COUNTRIES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN, THE NEAR EAST, ASIA AND THE FAR EAST

It is common knowledge that there is a grave dearth of food in most countries where staple diets are based on rice. More specifically, war and its consequences created extremely serious problems of agricultural production and food procurement in extensive regions of the Near East and Asia, where nutritional and living standards were already very low.

It was, therefore, appropriate that the Director-General himself should proceed to these countries and the idea of such a trip became a reality during the last session of the Conference, when several Delegations indicated that their Governments would welcome a visit from me. A Regional Office was then being set up as a focal point for developing programs of activities in Asia and the Far East, technical meetings were being planned which would be largely of an exploratory nature, and many decisions had to be taken in relation to specific

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specific policy issues. I then ~~XXXXXXXX~~ decided to act upon the invitations from that region for the purpose of obtaining personal first-hand knowledge of prevailing conditions in the fields of production, distribution and consumption; discussing with the highest authorities the participation of their countries in the activities of FAO, as well as the methods whereby the latter could be of increasing assistance to them; meeting with the National FAO Committees and arousing or developing public interest in the possibilities of international action.

The mission I planned had to be so calculated as to cover as much ground as reasonably feasible within a period of three months, the maximum time that I could be absent from Headquarters. It was thus found possible on my way out to visit a few countries in the Mediterranean Basin, and our Regional Offices at Rome and Cairo. In addition, the itinerary and time-schedule were so devised as to enable me to attend at least part of the meetings of the International Rice Commission and of the Indo-Pacific Fisheries Council which were to hold their first sessions early in 1949. It was, unfortunately, impossible for me to be present at the Forestry Conference which opened at Mysore on 28 March, 1949, as attendance there would have prevented me from going to Australia.

On January 16th I left New York for London, and thence proceeded to Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Istanbul, (weather conditions prevented me from going to Ankara), Egypt, West Pakistan, India, East Pakistan, Siam, the Phillippine Republic, Shanghai, Japan, Korea Singapore and Australia. I returned to Washington on 17th April.

II

When visiting the Near East and Asia, one gathers a disturbing impression of very unsettled political and social conditions. In almost every country, newspapers carry daily reports of uneasiness, unrest or conflict which range from severe political agitation or local disturbances to open rebellion and warfare. This situation may be purely national or involve more than one country, but nevertheless with very few exceptions, from Greece to China, the governments which I have visited have or have had to cope with open or concealed attempts to upset internal or external peace. The actual determining factors may be different, but it is clear that in the last analysis, such widespread unrest is, to a large extent, an aftermath of the last war.

Indeed, a most cursory survey of prevailing conditions in rural and urban districts throughout the East and Far East cannot fail to indicate that there are substantial grounds for social uneasiness.

Only a year ago, the Council of FAO pointed to the major underlying cause in the following diagnosis, which applies even more strongly in the Far East then elsewhere:-

> "The world food situation is still grave...Even if improvement does occur, world production will remain far below needs for the coming year..... In many countries even hoped-for increases in production would leave levels of nutrition at a point where the morale, health and working capacity of the people inevitably are impaired; the repercussions are especially grave for children and young people generally".*

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That the food situation is serious in the East and Far East need hardly be emphasized again. The rice-consuming peoples of that region, with the exception of Siam, Burma and Indo-China, are generally worse off than ever before. Present world production of rice, which is estimated at a total of 144.5 million metric tons, is still below pre-war ~~gire~~ figures by 3 million metric tons, while, on the other hand, the population in South East Asia may have increased by as much as 85 million since 1939. The increase in population in the Far East is substantial, the percentage of net annual gains probably ranging between 1 percent and 2.5 percent. It is estimated that the population of Pakistan increased by about one million between the middle of 1947 to the middle of 1948, that of India by more than 3 millions. In Japan, the net natural increase has averaged some 4,000 per day, during the last few years. Food consumption per head of population is so low that any increase in population presents a very serious problem, unless food production can be greatly increased.

To speak of the food problem in the Far East is to speak of cereals. In nearly all the countries visited, the Governments' preoccupation, at least for the immediate future is to make available more rice, or alternatively, more wheat. This is the overwhelming emergency which precludes, for the present, any consideration of the dearth of meat, dairy products, fats and oils, etc. In some sections, there are supplies of fruits and more rarely of green vegetables, while in others, rather unsuccessful efforts are being made to make more fish available for local consumption. But the stark fact remains that an overwhelming majority of the peoples in the Near East, Asia and the Far East is practically dependent upon cereals only (generally rice) for its subsistence and that procurement of sufficient supplies is impossible, whether locally or through imports. The Government of India estimates its deficit of rice this year at 5 million tons, of which about half only can be procured. The results are apparent wherever rationing can be applied: the daily allowance per head is never more than 12 ounces, and in Calcutta is as low as 9 ounces. In Japan, where food imports are financed by the Occupying Authorities, the average daily ration in urban districts supplies less than 1,550 calories, of which 1,350 are derived from rice and potatoes.

* April, 1948 Introduction to Report of Second Session

Such is the general picture - a gloomy one. But it is made even more depressing when the following additional factors are taken into consideration, and when one stops to reflect upon their mutual reaction:

~~X~~ (a) In many areas, distribution facilities are completely inadequate. Rail transportation is almost non-existant; roads are poor; both are gravely insufficient and even draught power is very scarce. Wherever possible, use is made of transportation by by river or canal barges, but in certain areas (East Pakistan for instance) it stops completely during the dry season. Moreover, where fighting is going on, insecurity is such that farmers cannot or dare not carry their goods to adjacent markets.

(b) In many districts, urban and rural, the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees, devoid of the barest necessities of life, is adding a tremendous

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and unexpected pressure upon food supplies, as well as upon shelter, clothing and medical supplies. Everyone is aware of the Palestine Arab Refugee problem, but similar comditions have developed in the course of the last two years as a result of partition between India and Pakistan, and have long existed as a consequence of the civil war in China. Many cities in the East are teeming with a population which has increased, sometimes many fold, as compared wit prewar figures. To quote just two instances, Shanghai now has a population of nearly six millions. and Calcutta of over seven millions.

(c) Where rationing is impossible, available supplies are sometimes being disposed of without any regard for the necessity of spreading them until the next harvest, thereby creating very disturbing situations as soon as these supplies are exhausted.

It will be appreciated that the above conditions do not all prevail at the same time and to the same degree in all the areas where the food situation is serious. Indeed, local factors vary greatly from one region to another, even within the same country. But the consequences are strikingly similar wherever there is any dearth of food; prices become inflated, voluntary delivery by producers breaks down and there is acute distress even in rural areas. I was told, for instance, that quite frequently in rural East Bengal, the average consumption did not exceed 1,000 calories per day.

These millions of underfed people, whose chief and constant preoccupation is to procure food for themselves and their children, live under shockingly miserable conditions. They go about barefoot and clothed in rags, with haggard faces, and many of them do not even have a roof under which to seek shelter. I have actually seen children under ten years of age, naked, sleeping in the streets of large cities, amid the bustle of a major thoroughfare.

In rural areas, housing and other facilities are very primitive. The walls of living quarters and adjacent courtyards are built of mud, the roof if any being made of thatch. Cattle, donkeys, camels and other domestic animals share these living quarters where poverty and squalor are rife. In many parts of the East, cow-dung is practically the only source of fuel. The water supply is inadequate and contaminated. None of the most simple amenities of life are available to these millions of destitute farmers who have only their hands, and those of their wives and children, to raise poor crops on depleted soils. Many do not even own any draught animals.

Illiteracy is prevalent. Some districts report as many as 90% of their inhabitants are illiterate.

As might be expected, disease is highly prevalent in the Far East, being endemic to most areas and frequently reaching epedemic proportions in many. Disturbing statistics were quoted by competent authorities. Tuberculosis is increasing at an alarming rate and malaria still takes a heavy toll of lives, either directly or indirectly. I have seen villages surrounded by moats in order to collect and retain flood water for all domestic purposes

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purposes during the dry season, thereby supplying ideal breeding grounds for malaria-and water-borne diseases. Irrigation methods, and in particular the lack of proper drainage, also account for the endemic character of these diseases which in certain areas may affect as much as 35 percent of the population, and XXXX whose capacity to produce is thereby gravely impaired.

Needless to say, diseases and parasites also cause an alarmingly high death rate among domestic animals.

III

That these really appalling conditions are the major underlying cause of much of the social and political unrest in the countries I visited is not denied. Nor can it be questioned that the prevailing agitation, social disturbance or actual warfare conversely hamper any effort to improve economic and social conditions, and even bring about major setbacks in whatever progress has already been achieved. This was particularly evident to me in the rural districts adjoining Shanghai, where farmers would certainly do much better and food would be more readily available, given stable conditions

...vernments are fully aware of this situation and of their responsibilities. They know that the vicious circle just described can be broken only by vigorous action and most of them have specific and carefully considered plans. But they require assistance if they are to achieve anything in a reasonably short time.

A word of caution should be said at this point. The normal tendency of governments is to consider theier economic XXXXXXXX problems as specifically national and generally to overlook or deal too casually with their external implications. This, in the long run, will prove dangerous. While it has become almost an economic truism to state that the key to better liging standards is to increase local production of agricultural commodities and manufactured goods, it is too often implied that self-sufficiency should be the long-term objective. There is at least a tendency to disregard the possibilities of foreign trade or merely to indulge in wishful thinking regarding the conquest of export markets abroad. I strongly believe that the countries whose agricultural and food economies are based on rice should approach their problems together, along the lines of what has been taking place recently in Europe: concerted planning of regional development with the support of the most advanced nations of the world. I hope - indeed I feel sure- that FAO, through its International Rice Commission can act as a leader along these lines.

IV

There is much room for simple and short-term but far-reaching improvement in the field of agricultural development. Production can be stepped up rapidly through the use of less primitive methods of cultivation. The overall defici in basic foodstuffs which according to government authroties is about 10 percent of current levels of demand, could easily be turned into relative abudnance, even in the face of population trends.

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These methods generally fall under the following main categories, where long-term action obviously dovetails with the short-term measures

(a) increasing the yield per acre of land already under cultivation.

(b) raising additional crops on such lands;

(c) bringing more land under cultivation.

(a) That yeilds can be considerably increased is self-evident to anyone with any knowledge of agriculture.

Unquestionably, the soil has been gravely depleted by the very primitive methods of cultivation used. Where cow dung is the only source of fuel, where straw is cut as closely as possible to the ground to be used as feed or to serve as raw material for local handcrafts, where farmers are so poor they cannot follow desirable practices of rotation of fallow, and where they use seeds of poor or doubtful quality, the yields cannot help steadily diminishing. It is essential not only to make better varieties of seeds available to the farmers, but also to improve the humus content of the soil. Under the conditions that prevail in Asia, this restoration can, in some situations, be achieved rapidly by leguminous green manure. Farmers should be given sufficient incentives to undertake to grow suitable leguminous cover crops on condition that the latter would generally not be used as fodder but would be ploughed under. In many instances, this can be done at a different time of the year than when cash crops are under cultivation, provided water is made available. The tendency to rely solely upon chemical fertilizers is dangerous; in any case, it does not build up humus and it is far more expensive, particularly in terms of foreign currencies.

In addition to supplying better seeds and restoring soil fertility, action is required to assist local farmers with their techniques and implements. I have seen so many clear evidences of hard workers who applied rudimentary methods of cultivation and apparently lacked the proper tools for doing an efficient job, that I cannot imphasize this aspect of the problem too forcefully. As examples, at least scythes should be substituted for sickles and raught cattle should be made available for ploughing and harrowing. There are methods my which FAO could halp achieve such simple results which would go a long way towards winning the confidence of the farmers.

In a great many instances, improper use is being made of available irrigation facilities. Too little, or conversely, too much, moisture is brought to the land, once more because the implements or techniques are not adequate. I have myself seen many cases where waterlogging of the soil was increasingly prevalent because of insufficiet drainage.

Perhaps the most urgent need is for setting up and progressively developing extension services which would be so equipped as to assist the local farmers effectively and not merely to dispense theoretical advice.

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In addition to making the findings of science available to farmers, there is considerable scope for development by the extended use of better methods already known and practised, and for comparatively simple improvement in tools, machines and practices. This underlines the importance of making available practical men who have the confidence of the farmers. These services might well be started, initially, in local areas. By securing the cooperation of a few farms in the area practical demonstrations could be carried out in many fields such as use of better seeds, use of insecticides, proper preparation of land, and proper irrigation methods.

A corollary need is an expansion of training facilities in practical agairulcute to provide suitably trained people for staffing an extension service. For the immediate future it is possible that this may be accomplished through intensive short courses. It should be emphasized that for this purpose there appears to be a greater need for men with some basic training in agriculture and extension methods than for highly trained technicians. Special attention should be given to the training of local leaders and field workers drawn from among the people themselves.

Such a programme would, I believe, pay big dividends in higher yeilds through relatively simple and inexpensive changes in farming practices.

(b) Additional crops can also be raised easily and quickly on land which is already cultivated.

I have observed that, unfortunately, such important waterways as the Nile, the Indus, the Ganges, the Choa Phya and many others are not being used appreciably for irrigation purposes during the low-water season. The areas where a second crop is grown, even along the banks of such rivers and canals are extremely limited.

I happened to fly very low over the delta of the ganges towards the end of February and the sections where a second crop was being grown appeared very green, in sharp contrast with the brownish land that remained fallow, and it was disturbing to see that in a country where water is very abundant all the year round, the green patches were so few and so small. I also observed along other rivers that a steep bank alone stands as an insurperable obstacle to the irrigation of low-lying lands.

The areas where a second crop could be produced during the dry seasnn are very extensive indeed, and the outlay in terms of equipment or money would be very small. In many cases, it would suffice to install inexpensive pumps to bring a sufficient supply of water from the river to the land. In other areas, underground water could easily be tapped with small tube wells. The latter would even achieve a double purpose in waterlogged land by lowering the water table where it is too high and bringing moisture to dry zones, a few miles away.

(c) Regarding the irrigation of desert areas

where no cultivation at all is at present possible, I have had many plans laid before me by the governments I have visited. These plans generally consist in building barrages in the upper levels of important rivers to provide perennial

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perennial water to irrigation canals, and they are so devised as to achieve at the same time many other purposes, including flood control, soil conservation, hydro-electrict power, industrial development, water transportation, and even fish cultivation. They are ambitious schemes which require heavy financial outlays and can be achieved only in a matter of many years.

These schems run into millions of acres and would undoubtedly contribute extensively to developing food and agricultural production to keep up with prospective population increases in Asia and the Far East. They should be included, wherever this is not already the case, in national plans of land development and population settlement with specific production and settlement goals for each area. In connection with such developments it is to my mind imperative that sufficient attention be paid to drainage problems, combatting water-logging, alkalinity of the soil and reducing the prevalence of water-borne diseases. At the same time provisions must be made for an adequate and safe water supply to villages for domestic purposes.

There are other land reclamation projects which also go far towards improving the prospects for agricultural production. They are, however, hampered by the lack of suitable heavy equipment.

Obviously there are other aspects of national and regional planning which should not be lost sight of. I shall confine myself here to mentioning a few which are of fundamental importance.

(a) Cattle raising should receive a great deal of attention both for nutritional reasons and because of the need of cattle for draught power. Very many cattle have been destroyed by war and by rinderpest, and in the Phillippines for instance, the number of animals is now less than half of pre-war. Improvements could be achieved rapidly FAO is already launching a large-scale campaign of rinderpest vaccination which should be followed as soon as possible by a programe for the improvement of live stock. There are good cattle breeds already in existence, well adapted to the area, in Asia, and plans might be made to develop a detailed program of cattle production covering more than one country, if not the whole region.

(b) This program would call for suitable production of feeds. There is need, in any case, for diversifying agricultural production in most countries I visited, not only for nutritional but also for purposes of soil conservation and improvement. Account should be taken of this requirement in defining local production goals over a period of years.

(c) There are in the East huge aquatic resources and there is almost unlimited field for developing fish consumption. Here again, progress is hampered by the lack of suitable equipment and, to a lesser extent, of technical knowledge. Boats, cordage, fishing tackle and nets are lacking and apparently cannot be procured, for lack of financial resources. Equipment for processing and transportation is also needed.

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(d) While there are, at least in some regions, huge forest resources, fire wood is completely unobtainable except locally in forest areas. Vast areas of good timber remain unexploited due to inaccessability of equipment and transportation facilities. Here again equipment for cutting, sawing and transportation of wood is not available. National plans of economic development should include the procurement of such facilities. In other regions. forest conservation and reforestation are required.

(e) In agricultural planning, attention should be paid to land tenure conditions, which call for revision in many sections of the Near East and Asia, where they are among the major indirect causes of prevailing low yields. The reforms which are now being carried out in Japan and Korea should be closely investigated. Farmers should have sufficient land and sufficient incentives to be able to make a decent living by their labour.

While land reforms will go a long way towards achieving this objective, they should be coupled with the development of rural industries to help relieve rural underemployment and aid in the development of agriculture. The same may be said for improvement of rural roads and development of rural amenities, such as water-supply and sanitation, which are vital to health and therefore to productive efficienty. The development of co-operation and the provision of cheap agricultural credit are other prime needs. Price polices should also be carefully balanced to provide decent remuneration for farmers.* As long as the farmer and his family suffer from disease, their lives are so shortened and their energy is so depleted that the full effect of program-s to increas production will not be realized.
Attacks on malaria, intestinal parasite, tuberculosis and other preventible diseases should be regarded as an essential part of a coordinated program.

* In one country the price of wheat was unchanged in 1948 as compared with 1947, while farmers had to pay three times as much for fertilizers.

Briefly summarized, such are the main observation I was able to make during a trip which was unfortunately much too short.

From country to country, I have met with clear evidence that my visit was welcome and I wish here to convey my deep appreciation of the arrangements made to make it profitable and pleasant. In particular, I appreciated the informal talks with my hosts. When, of an evening, I was able to sit with them and discuss what I had seen during the day, I could obtain a much more accurate and concrete vision of the difficulties with which the Governments had to cope. There is no adequate sustitute for personal contacts and I hope I have been able, for my part, to contribute to be a better understanding of FAO and its policies.

FAO stands ready to help. It is unfortunately not able to make any contribution in terms of money or material. But it can supply information, it can advise and furnish technical assistance, and it can help to bring about common action among all governments interested in solving the problems outlined above, as well as common action with other international bodies.

I firmly believe that the major requirement is to build up some machinery whereby the existing gap between knowledge and practice can be bridged. But the approach must be strictly

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practical and the solutions that are devised must be adapted to local conditions, even if they are not perfect

FAO can help in devising these solutions and in planning a concerted approach. It can help in defining the requirements in terms of material such as irrigation pumps and tube wells, tractors and farm implements. It can help in obtaining competent expert advice.

What I have seen on this trip is, to my mind, the greatest possible challenge to FAO.

But it is a challenge to governments as well not only in the East, but all over the world.

The initiative rests with them.

No.F.2-49/-Policy,
Government of India,
Ministry of Agriculture,
New Delhi, the 12th August, 1949.

From

Shri.J.V.A.Nehemiah, M.A.,
Under Secretary,
Ministry of AGRICULTURE, Government of India.

To

(1) All Provincial Governments

(2) Chief Commissioners Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara-Himachal Pradesh, Cutch, Andamans,Bhopal, Rampur, Coorg, Bilaspur.

Sir,

In February 1949, Mr. Narris E.Dodd, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, visited India and other countries in the Middle East and Far East,. The conclusion of his visit Mr. Dodd submitted a report on his tour to the Council of the Organisation. As it is felt that some of the remarks and suggestions made by him might be of interest to you three copies of his report are forwarded herewith.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-xxxxxx,
Under Secretary X.

Copy with 20 spare copies of the report forwarded to the Ministry of States with the request that these may be distributed to the various states Unions.

By order,

Under Secretary.